United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

August 7, 1991

Mr. Salem Azzam
Secretary General
Islamic Council
16 Grosvenor Crescent
London SW1 7EP England

Dear Mr. Azzam:

This is in reply to your July 22 letter regarding shortages of food and medicine in Iraq.

Reports of food shortages and epidemics in some parts of Iraq, particularly the south, are a source of deep concern. The President emphasized from the beginning of the Gulf crisis last fall that we had no quarrel with the Iraqi people, and this remains U.S. policy. It is not the intent of the U.S. government or the international community that the Iraqi people should pay the price for the aggressive and irresponsible actions of the present Iraqi leadership.

Indeed, the United States, along with our coalition partners, has played a leading role in aiding Iraqi civilians, particularly the hundreds of thousands forced to flee their homes in the wake of the popular uprising against Saddam Hussein last spring. The U.S. government pledged $61.3 million to the UN appeal for relief operations through the end of this month, and this week announced a substantial new contribution to private/voluntary organizations conducting supplemental feeding programs and immunization campaigns concentrating on women and children.

The present Iraqi leadership has consistently shown little concern for the welfare of the Iraqi people, particularly groups, such as the Shi'a in the south and Kurds in the north, which have been at odds with the central government. Indeed, international relief agencies have documented recent government diversion of available food stocks away from areas in greatest need of relief.

It is essential to maintain all possible economic and political pressure on the Iraqi regime to meet its obligations under United Nations Security Council Resolution 687. Within that context, we are seriously concerned with food and health conditions in Iraq.

We will continue to support humanitarian relief efforts as necessary. Moreover, we are consulting with coalition partners and other members of the United Nations Security Council over a possible international response involving equitable distribution of food and humanitarian supplies throughout the country under strict control and close international monitoring.

The United States has a clear interest in the course of events in Iraq. Saddam Hussein has a great deal to answer for, and President Bush has made it clear that the U.S. government will not have normal relations with Iraq as long as Saddam remains in power. More broadly, U.S. policy will continue to advance our vision of a democratic, tolerant Iraq which respects the rights of all its citizens and lives at peace with its neighbors.

I hope you find this information is useful in responding to your questions.

Sincerely,

Ronald E. Neumann
Director
Office of Northern Gulf Affairs
(Iran and Iraq)

المجلس الإسلامي
Islamic Council

22 July 1991

President George Bush
The White House
Washington DC

Mr President,

According to a recent report by Harvard University, among other expert analyses, unless there is an immediate and drastic improvement in living conditions in Iraq an estimated further 170,000 children under one year old will die by this autumn. The general situation in Iraq is very acute and those who are suffering most are the poor, the old, the weak, the sick and the very young - all of them innocent human beings.

The remedy for this tragic situation lies very much in your hands for it is the continuation of sanctions against Iraq that is at the heart of this calamity. Unless sanctions are lifted many hundreds of thousands of innocent people will die, many more than if you had ordered your forces to continue to Baghdad, and the inevitable result will be an upsurge of anti-American feeling not only in Iraq but throughout the Arab and Muslim world.

Mr President, I hope and pray that you will think in terms of your responsibility as a human being. One day you will undoubtably face God and will be accountable to Him for your actions. There has been enough death and destruction. Now, I appeal to you to help to lift the sanctions, thus easing the lives of the millions of innocent people in Iraq.

Yours sincerely,

Salem Azzam

Salem Azzam
Secretary General

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